With the recent success of Shakespeare as a screenwriter, this online course will explore Shakespeare in film. Through readings of Shakespeare plays and their cinematic adaptations, the class will consider whether (and how) the storytelling is aided, or inhibited, by the conditions of film-making. A sustained inquiry of the course, however, will be the various media, in different periods, in which Shakespeare has been produced. Rather than considering how Shakespeare has become our contemporary, we will ask the more interesting question of why successive generations have sought to reinterpret Shakespeare and bring him to their own contemporary context. What does this say about the cultural value of Shakespeare? Why does that value transmit so far beyond English-speaking culture? Assignments will involve comparing printed play-texts with the various filmed versions and thinking about the choices made as Shakespeare is produced in a medium he never could have imagined. The class is entirely situated in an online environment, and students will be assessed on their participation in class discussion (conducted on discussion board), blog entries and collaborative work as part of group discussion and group wikis. Students will be asked to write short response papers and three essays of 4, 6, and 8 pages respectively. You will be allowed to revise and expand your response papers as part of the longer essay assignments. Plays will include: *Romeo and Juliet* (and Baz Luhrmann’s “Romeo + Juliet”); *Richard III* (and Richard Loncraine’s “Richard III” as well as Al Pacino’s “Looking for Richard”); *Henry IV, Pt. I* and *II* (and Orson Welles, “The Chimes at Midnight”); and *Macbeth* (and Akira Kurosawa, “Throne of Blood”).

The recommended edition for this course will be The Arden Shakespeare series, and the recommended supporting text is *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film* (ed. Russell Jackson). In addition to the required reading, you will be asked to watch filmed productions of the play.

Each day corresponds to a week of work in summer sessions; accordingly, each “week” on the syllabus corresponds to a virtual class meeting (twice a week).

All students will be required to contribute at least one posting to each Discussion Board and each Group Discussion to which you are assigned. Because we do not meet as a class, an online course is writing-intensive. You will have to contribute as much time—online and on homework—as you would ordinarily dedicate to a lecture course. Lecture ordinarily consumes 2 ½ hours of time every “week,” so you should expect to use this time on your class/group discussions. Please contribute anywhere from 40-50 minutes a day to discussion. (Since I am able to see the amount of time that you log in the course organization, I strongly recommend your consistent participation.) If you save your contributions to the final day of the “week” our discussions will degrade into individual soliloquies.
This course is accelerated (as is the case with all summer semester courses), so you will be working quite intensively over the six weeks. Your participation—in the form of discussion and responses—will count for 25% of your grade; the four assigned response papers will count, cumulatively, for 15%; the essays will be 15%, 20%, and 25%, respectively. You will be allowed to use the content of your response papers as the foundation for you larger essays, should you choose to do so. In most cases, this will require revision, as essays of different length require different arguments.

**WEEK 1 (JULY 14): Cultural Transposition**

**TEXT:** William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*
**FILM:** Baz Luhrmann, “Romeo + Juliet”
**TOPICS:** Cultural value and evaluation

1. **Discussion Board:** We will begin to explore Shakespeare through a series of questions (Does love mean the same to us as to a sixteenth-century audience?). I will begin this discussion with a set of prompts—starting with this first question that I pose.

2. **Discussion Board:** We will begin to explore cultural value by considering whether the language or the action situates the play. Does it matter that Romeo and Juliet speak a perfect English sonnet when they first meet? (Please research the sonnet form: what is it, and what is its history? What are the conventions of the form?)

3. **Discussion Board:** You will be asked to think about why Luhrmann bothers to retain the verse, and to discuss this in online group discussion. Why thoroughly revise the context in which the action occurs, but keep the language that conveys that action in the (sixteenth century) play?

4. **Group Discussion:** You will analyze, through smaller group discussion, whether the physical setting of the play—contemporary Verona Beach—actually helps to make the issues of the play contemporary.

5. **Blogs:** You will generate your own examples of how Shakespeare is made contemporary in a blog environment. You will be divided into groups of five, and asked to produce these examples for the rest of the group—film clips, visual art, text, UTube. **This blog needs to be completed by July 17.**

**WEEK 2 (JULY 17): Media Production**

**TEXT:** None
**FILM:** None

**TOPICS:** The production of Shakespeare in his time

1. Did Shakespeare write his works (no, I don’t mean that the Earl of Oxford did)
2. The contingencies of play writing in a rehearsal situation
3. The contingencies of print

1. You should take an online tour of MITH (the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities), which is taking on the project, with the Folger Shakespeare Library, of digitizing all of the various quarto
editions of Shakespeare’s works. (I have provided a short Jing presentation on searching the MITH site.)

2 Research: You will be asked to find out how many quartos of Romeo and Juliet were produced before the 1623 Folio in which the play is included. Please enter the results of your findings as a one or two sentence response by July 18.

3 Discussion Board: After July 18 (which is to say the 19th and 20th), you will discuss the implications of so many quartos for the play texts of “Shakespeare” that we read today.

4 Research: You will begin to learn about research, and will locate one article each on this subject—which is to say, the multiple quartos of Shakespeare plays—and embed them for your fellow students as part of a group blog.

5 Reading: Read the assigned chapter from Tiffany Stern, Making Shakespeare in order to learn about Shakespeare in performance—and how the plays move from playhouse to print house. All assigned reading is located in the course documents file.

6 Journal: You will be asked to log your reactions (July 19th and 20th) to all of this information: how does it affect or change your reaction to Shakespeare? How do you understand the Shakespeare text differently?

WEEK 3 (JULY 21): Love and Marriage

TEXT: Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew
FILM: Gil Junger, “10 Things I Hate About You”

TOPICS: Gender and sexuality
Female subordination

1 Reading and Discussion Board: Please read the assigned chapter of Douglas Brode, Shakespeare in the Movies: From the Silent Era to Shakespeare in Love and consider the representation of the staging of Romeo and Juliet in the film “Shakespeare in Love.”

2 Discussion Board: Obviously, the social context in which the play unfolds is dispelled in the contemporary adaptation of “10 Things I Hate About You.” To what extent does the story fail in the importation? Does it succeed at all?

3 Journal: Please log your reaction to this question: “Absent the sixteenth century social context, does this story have anything to say on the condition of women? On social hierarchy?”

4 Group Discussion: You will be asked to consider why the plot of The Taming of the Shrew is refreshed in this way at all. Does this indicate a kind of cultural capital that the film is exploiting? Or is the sixteenth-century context of the play simply too far from our own terms?

5 You will be provided a short Jing presentation on searching the OED (for “comedy”).

6 Response Paper: You will be asked to generate a short response paper about genre (2 pages). Is the play still a comedy in its contemporary adaption? (You must think in terms of the genre of comedy, not “comedy” as a contemporary term.) These papers must be submitted to ELMS, through the assignment tool, by July 24.
**Week 4 (July 24): Gender Bending**

TEXT: Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*  
Shakespeare, *As You Like It*  
FILM: Trevor Nunn, “Twelfth Night”  
**30-MINUTE VIDEO LECTURE (PASSWORD: ENGL304)**

**TOPICS:** Gender and Selfhood (and how gender destabilizes selfhood)  
Master-servant relationships

1 **Discussion Board:** You will be asked to discuss how *As You Like It*, in more general terms, explores the merging of heterosexual love with same-sex friendship, with friendship in heterosexual love as well as the eroticism of same-sex friendship. What about the attraction in master-servant relationships?

2 **Research:** You will be asked to find articles on sexual disguise that you will embed for your fellow students as part of a group blog.

3 **Group Discussion:** You will be asked to discuss in groups why *Twelfth Night* contains a pair of heterosexual twins. How does this complicate the device of sexual disguise?

4 **Response Paper:** You will be asked to generate a short response paper (2 pages) on sexual disguise in *Twelfth Night*. Obviously, this play has a more complicated relationship with the device than does *As You Like It*. Why does Shakespeare complicate the dramatic strategy? What is the purpose of doing so? These papers must be submitted through the assignment tool, by July 27.

5 **Discussion Board:** You will be asked to explore the role of the servant—and the complexities of service. How is the eroticism of master-servant relationships explored in *Twelfth Night*? Does the social status of a person affect their gender?

**Week 5 (July 28): Bad Government**

TEXT: Shakespeare, *Richard III*  
FILM(S): Al Pacino, “Looking for Richard”  
Richard Loncraine, “Richard III”

**First Essay Due (4 pages), 5pm—submit through the assignment tool**

**TOPICS:** Shakespeare in production

1 **Group Discussion:** You will discuss Shakespeare in performance in discussion groups in the context of Pacino’s film.

2 **Reading:** Please read the assigned chapter from Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare* in order to think more deeply about the process of rehearsal and how this might have affected the production (the writing) of Shakespeare’s plays.

3 **Journal:** You will create journal entries after viewing each film, and answer a set of questions: Does it matter how the play begins? Does the film’s different beginning change how we view the action? Change the storytelling?
4 Discussion Board: You will be asked to consider the familiarity or alienation of each mode of production—Pacino’s “rehearsal” setting, and Loncraine’s situation of the story in a world that resembles Nazi Germany. Certainly, conveying Richard III to the more contemporary context is meant to bring him closer. But it still produces an alienation effect—insofar as we are not any more familiar with the Nazi context than late medieval England (which is when Richard III ostensibly takes place).

WEEK 6 (JULY 31): Kings and Princes

TEXT(S): Shakespeare, Henry IV, Pt. I and II
FILM: Orson Welles, “The Chimes at Midnight”
30-MINUTE VIDEO LECTURE

TOPICS: Nobility and Government

1 Reading: Please read the assigned chapter, David Scott Kastan, Shakespeare after Theory (London: Routledge, 1999), chapter 6 (“Proud Majesty Made a Subject”).

2 Reading: Please read the assigned chapter, Shakespeare after Theory, chapter 7 (“The King hath many marching in his Coats”).

3 Group Discussion: “If I Henry IV can be said to be “about” anything, it is about the production of power.” You will be asked to discuss this declaration in the context of the two articles that you have read for the week. The discussion will take place within groups.

WEEK 7 (AUGUST 4): Good Government?

TEXT: Shakespeare, Henry V
FILM: Kenneth Branagh, “Henry V”
30-MINUTE VIDEO LECTURE

TOPICS: Irony
      Representation (and self-direction)

1 Group Discussion: You will be asked to discuss how the representation of Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym in the play undercuts the representation of Henry as an admirable figure. How does this work in Branagh’s production?

2 Response Paper: You will be asked to generate a short response paper (2 pages) that considers how Branagh’s production does NOT allow the play to be read ironically. How does Branagh foreclose the reading of Henry as anything but an admirable figure? What are the possible reasons for this? This response paper should be submitted to ELMS through the Assignment tool by August 6. I have uploaded an article by Gerald Gould that might be helpful in answering this question.

3 Reading: In order to further explore this issue, you will be asked to read Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, “History and Ideology: the instance of Henry V.”
WEEK 8 (AUGUST 7): No Government

TEXT: Shakespeare, Hamlet
FILM: Michael Almereyda, “Hamlet”

TOPICS: “Bad” quartos

1. You will become familiar with The Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP) online and the Shakespeare in Quarto website. (I have provided a short Jing presentation on searching these sites.)

2. Group Blog: You will be asked to find two different quartos of Hamlet and compare them to the Folio text. You will post your findings as part of a group blog.

3. Discussion Board: You will be asked to discuss the removal of Hamlet from its sixteenth-century context in Almereyda’s film. Does the story make sense absent its religious, philosophical, and ideological context?

4. Group Discussion: Why does Hamlet delay?

5. Group Discussion: Why does Ophelia go mad?

WEEK 9 (AUGUST 11): Uxorious / Uxoricide

TEXT: Shakespeare, Othello
FILM: Tim Blake Nelson, “O”
Second Essay Due (6 pages)

TOPICS: Nobility and Marriage
Nobility and Career

1. Reading: Please read Jean E. Feerick, Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in the Renaissance (University of Toronto Press, 2010), 1-17.

2. Discussion Board: How does Nelson’s “O” depict issues of race? Is this consistent with how “race” is explored in Othello?

3. Discussion Board: You will be asked to discuss early modern and modern racial categories—and the difference between them. You will have to take into account the description of early modern race that Feerick lays out in her book, and the previously held class discussion.

4. Journal: What is the modern category of race? How stable is it? How does it tend to inflect our reading of Othello?

5. Journal: How is sex and marriage constructed in relation to race in the United States today? How is it different in other countries in which you have spent some time (if this is applicable)? How is it different from the early modern context?
WEEK 10 (AUGUST 14): Regicide

TEXT: Shakespeare, *Macbeth*
FILM: Akira Kurosawa, “Throne of Blood”

TOPICS: Cultural Revolution

1 Response Paper: You will be asked to write a short response paper (2 pages) to “Throne of Blood,”
discussing the translation of the Shakespearean plot to a Japanese context (of roughly the same period).
What is lost or changed in the adaptation? Why would a Japanese director attempt to import Shakespeare at all?
Please submit your responses for peer review by August 15.

2 Responses in Group Discussion: You should read and respond to each other’s papers as part of peer
review. Please return these responses to your fellow collaborators by August 17.

3 Discussion Board: We will consider the cultural value of the Shakespeare play, and what happens under
the pressure of interpretation: is Shakespeare still Shakespeare?

WEEK 11 (AUGUST 18): Age and Madness

TEXT: Shakespeare, *King Lear*
FILM: Akira Kurosawa, “Ran”

TOPICS: Sources and plots
      Old age


2 Research and Group Discussion: You will be asked to discover the sources for *King Lear*—and to
write a short description of your findings as part of a group discussion about source materials.

3 Discussion Board: If “Shakespeare” collapses under the pressure of interpretation, what of
“Shakespeare” remains? If he is not the author of the plot, is there anything of “Shakespeare” left?

4 Response Papers and Group Discussion: Does Shakespeare depict old age in such a way that compels
a sympathetic response? Is this simply part of the story? You will have to read one of the sources
presented in your group (#2) to formulate a short paper (2 pages) in answer to the question, and one
of your peers will review it. Please post your papers by August 20; please return these responses by
August 22.

WEEK 12 (AUGUST 21): Deposition

TEXT: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
FILM: Julie Taymor, “The Tempest”

Final Essay Due (8 pages), August 24th, 5pm

TOPICS: Final Goodbyes
1 **Discussion Board:** We will discuss the play as Shakespeare’s departure from the stage, and will consider what we have learned through the term.

3 **Discussion Board and Conclusions:** a free-wheeling discussion about our discoveries throughout the course—led on discussion board by the instructor.